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DE RUEHLB #1921 1650950
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P 140950Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4038
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001921

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WERNER/SINGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/13/2016

TAGS: [IS](#) [KPKO](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: MGLE01: HIZBALLAH TOLD UN IT DID NOT FIRE FIRST
ON MAY 28...BUT WOULD NOT PREVENT PALESTINIANS FROM DOING SO

REF: BEIRUT 1690

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d)

HIZBALLAH ALL BUT ADMITS
TURNING A BLIND EYE

¶1. (C) On June 13, Georges Nasr, political officer in the office of UNSYG Personal Representative to Lebanon Geir Pederson, briefed econoff on a recent meeting between the UN office and Hizballah representatives in early June. Nasr said the Hizballah officials denied that Hizballah fired the first shot that resulted in a day of fighting with Israel on May 28 (reftel). The Hizballah officials denied that Hizballah officials had fired the Katyusha rockets early in the morning or the sniper shot in the early afternoon that wounded an Israeli soldier and led to robust Israeli airstrikes on Hizballah fixed positions. The Hizballah officials also denied foreknowledge of the attacks, claiming they did not know who was responsible, according to Nasr.

¶2. (C) However, Hizballah officials did suggest their complicity. They told Nasr and his colleagues that Hizballah would not have prevented Palestinian militants from retaliating for Israeli aggressions (in this case, alleged Israeli involvement in the assassination of Abu Hamzeh on May 26). Nor, the Hizballah officials continued, would they prevent attacks on Israel by Palestinian militants. Nasr got the impression that although the Hizballah officials seemed convincing in their denials of responsibility, they did not seem embarrassed by their suggestion that other militant groups appeared able to operate freely from areas under Hizballah influence.

COMMENT

¶3. (C) The Hizballah officials' admission of willingness to turn a blind eye to Palestinian attacks on Israel from southern Lebanon is troubling for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that Hizballah is willing to let violence flare along the Blue Line as long as Hizballah thinks it can plausibly deny responsibility for specific acts. Second, it shows a blatant disregard for UNSCR 1559 and UN attempts to work with all parties to at least keep the Blue Line situation contained. The introduction of Palestinian militants adds the danger of more provocative attacks and attacks on civilian targets that Hizballah would normally shun. One cannot help but think of the dangerous precedent of the Cairo Agreement, when the GOL secretly agreed to allow the PLO to fire upon northern Israel from Lebanon, to

disastrous results for Lebanon. All this said, the events of May 28 remain murky about who committed which acts, and what the supportive or collaborative roles of Hizballah might have been. End comment.

FELTMAN